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Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

CONNECTIONS

*A Network of Christ-Centered, Outwardly-Focused, Faith-Growing
Communities for the Sake of the World*

June 2026



On the Fourth of July of 2025

by Carolyn Draper, Director of Camps at Lutherhill Ministries

On the Fourth of July in 2025, I received several panicked texts from friends checking on my well-being. I was confused at first, and then I read the news. We were on our way home from family camp at Lutherhill. Like many parents, my heart ached imagining what the parents of Camp Mystic's girls were going through. Like many people who have been counselors at summer camp, my heart broke for the young people working at that camp. Why would anyone want to work at a summer camp, let alone send their child, when such tragedies are possible?

I grieved for those whose lives were lost, for those left without their loved ones, and for so many others outside of camp who lost lives and homes or were left with a future laced with trauma. I grieved for those who love summer camp and now question that love. I grieved for the many other camps that would face another very hard year if they planned to continue operating, and for those whose trust is now broken, possibly beyond repair.

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My Journey to Young Adults in Global Mission

by Gavin Gillar

In about three months, I will be going to Mexico for a year with the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program. YAGM is a year of accompaniment, faith formation, and service abroad. I will be living with a host family and integrated into the local community, growing and learning alongside them.

The process of country placement for Young Adults in Global Mission is one of mutual discernment- both the potential YAGM candidate and the YAGM staff, volunteers, and country coordinators are all in constant communication.

Mutual discernment happens over the course of months, starting from the moment you fill out your application and going into many rounds of interviews and finally ending in Chicago with DIP; Discernment, Interview, and Placement. Ultimately though, the final decision on where you go is out of your hands, something that simultaneously brought me peace and frustration.

About a month before DIP my placements were narrowed down to one of two countries, either Mexico or the United Kingdom. While neither of these were my first choice, I realized I'd be happy with either.

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Hurricane Season

by Maritza Sprague

June 1 marks the official beginning of hurricane season in the Atlantic basin, a time when communities across the Gulf Coast and southeastern United States are reminded of both the beauty and unpredictability of creation. Hurricane season continues through November 30, with peak activity often occurring between August and October.

For many families, the beginning of hurricane season brings memories of past storms, recovery efforts, and the resilience of neighbors helping neighbors. It is also an important reminder that preparation is not driven by fear, but by wisdom, stewardship, and care for one another.

Emergency management officials encourage households to review evacuation plans, gather emergency supplies, and stay informed throughout the season. Basic preparedness steps can make a significant difference during severe weather events. Families should ensure they have access to clean water, nonperishable food, medications, flashlights, batteries, important documents, and reliable communication methods in the event of power outages or evacuations.

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One of the goals and hopes of the Connections Team at a synodical level is to highlight some of the food and feeding ministries that are happening around the synod. The purpose of this is to connect other communities and congregations that have feeding ministries so that there can be shared resources, opportunities for questions, and conversations. The team is asking for you to [share your feeding ministries](#) so that we can connect our synod more closely with other congregations either doing similar ministries or interested in sharing the work with one another.



The Community Table Ministry at Bethlehem Lutheran

An Q&A with Pastor Denise Graves

Can you describe the feeding ministry at Bethlehem? What happens weekly? Monthly? Annually?

The Community Table ministry has taken shape through several phases and partnerships over time. I was not serving at Bethlehem when this ministry first began, but my understanding is that it became especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the congregation and community partners hired a chef to prepare meals five to seven days a week so that people in quarantine would have access to food and other necessities while remaining in safe and sanitary conditions. Even after the height of the pandemic, the feeding ministry continued because the zip code 70113 area is a food desert, and many unhoused individuals and families in the neighborhood live at or below the poverty line.

Over time, grant funding supported a coordinator who helped manage the Community Table, which at one point served meals three days a week—

Monday, Thursday, and Friday. During that period, Bethlehem partnered with Trinity Episcopal Church's Loaves and Fishes program, and Bethlehem's kitchen became a meal preparation site serving both members of the congregation and people across the New Orleans area. In 2024, Trinity Loaves and Fishes moved into a new facility, and Bethlehem began receiving meals from them on Thursdays. When funding for the coordinator ended that same year, the church's capacity shifted, and the meal program adapted accordingly.

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Lisa's Pieces: Creation Care Tips from the Synod Lutherans Restoring Creation Team

by Lisa Brenskelle

The mission of [Lutherans Restoring Creation](#) is to promote incorporation of care for creation into the full life and mission of the church, working in five areas: worship, education, discipleship, building & grounds, and public ministry/advocacy.

[Read more...](#)

June Creation Care Events

- [Living the Change](#) – June–August, dates/times individually scheduled, online
- [Interfaith Justice Advocacy Workshop](#) – Sunday, June 7, 2 – 3:30 p.m., online
- [From Resilience to “Thrivance” in a Collapsing World](#) – Sunday, June 28, 6 p.m., online

Contact gcs.lrc@gmail.com for details on any of these events.



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